

Get Prepared for the 2007 Hurricane Season

With hurricane season beginning June 1 and an active year predicted by experts, residents should take steps now to prepare for any hurricanes or tropical systems that may affect this area.

“It may not be something we think we will have to deal with here in Fairfax County, but as we saw in 2003, Hurricane Isabel caused major power outages and flooding in the county,” said C. Douglas Bass, emergency management coordinator for Fairfax County. “Being prepared just in case of a hurricane is an important safety precaution county residents should take.”

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management encourages residents to prepare for the upcoming season by reviewing hurricane safety tips and preparing an emergency supply kit. Be prepared for at least three days and include essential items such as a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, food and water, flashlights, a first-aid kit and medications.

Fairfax County residents also can take one precaution now by registering for alerts from the CEAN – Community Emergency Alert Network – at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean. The CEAN will deliver emergency alerts, notifications and updates during a major crisis or emergency to e-mail accounts, cell phones, text pagers, satellite phones and wireless PDAs registered on the system. In addition, residents are encouraged to register for additional CEAN alert categories, such as severe weather 24/7 and severe weather 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday.

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management, in cooperation with the National Weather Service and state emergency management officials, offers the following hurricane safety tips.

Before the Storm

- Cut dead trees and limbs that could fall on your home.
- Learn the difference between a watch and a warning. A hurricane watch indicates that hurricane conditions are possible in your area within 36 hours. A hurricane warning indicates that hurricane conditions are possible in your area within 24 hours.
- If you live in a flood-prone area, identify where to go if ordered to evacuate and the safest route to get there. If there is a flood, you may only have minutes to get to safety. Choose several places – a friend’s home in another town, a motel or a shelter. Remember, public shelters and many motels don’t allow pets in their facilities.
- If your home or business is in a flood-prone area, make sure you have a current flood insurance policy (not typically part of a standard insurance policy). A 30-day waiting period is generally required to purchase flood insurance, so take time now to visit your insurance agent to learn more.
- Take pictures of your property before the storm to help validate your claim and remember to take your policies with you if you need to evacuate.

When a Hurricane is Approaching

- To help keep food cold for several hours if the power goes out, fill plastic containers with water, leaving about an inch of space inside each one (remember, water expands as it freezes). Place the containers in the refrigerator and freezer. This chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold for several hours if the power goes out.
- Fill your bathtub with water to use for toilet flushing in case water is unavailable following a storm.
- Bring in garbage cans, lawn furniture and other items that could blow away.
- Fill your car's gas tank. Gas stations will be in short supply in a power outage.

After the Storm

- Prepare to be without power, telephone or any outside services for a week or more.
- Watch out for downed power lines, weakened structures, rodents and snakes, and avoid standing water.
- Avoid drinking tap water unless officials say it is safe to do so. Eat only foods you are absolutely sure are safe.
- Operate generators outdoors only in a well-ventilated, dry area, away from air intakes to the home. Never use a generator indoors or in attached garages. Poor ventilation can result in carbon monoxide poisoning or death.
- Avoid using candles as a light source. Deadly fires can result.

For more information, contact the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management at 703-324-2362, TTY 711, or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency.

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